

Mothers face workplace discrimination

10th August, 2013



More than one in four British mothers who have returned to work feel discriminated against. This is according to a survey conducted by the legal firm Slater and Gordon (S&G). Researchers questioned 1,975 women about their experiences in the workplace before and after giving birth. Most of the women had never filed any kind of complaint as they suspected it would be a waste of time and be even more detrimental to their career prospects. Grievances aired in the survey included mothers being overlooked for promotion, and more junior employees progressing faster up the career ladder. Another common gripe was their points of view being considered less worthy than those of colleagues without children.

The findings contrast with the opinions of managers and employers. A director at Britain's Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said: "We don't recognise the picture painted here. Our experience is that...businesses are better than ever at managing maternity leave and reintegrating mothers on their return." The UK's employment minister Jo Swinson said: "The government is committed to making sure that more businesses make the best use of women's talents throughout the organisation, from boardroom to the shop floor." S&G lawyer Kiran Daurka said: "It is shocking that so few women speak out when they suffer discrimination." She accused employers of avoiding the issues and of "burying their heads in the sand".

Sources: BBC / Scotsman / Sky News

Writing

Discrimination in the workplace is harmful to productivity, profits and company image. It must be eliminated. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

one in four / discriminated against / survey / giving birth / waste of time / career / opinions / maternity leave / committed / women's talents / avoiding the issues / sand

True / False

- Half of British mothers face discrimination at work. T / F
- A legal firm interviewed 19,750 working mothers. T / F
- Most of those interviewed had never complained about discrimination. T / F
- Mothers complained about their opinions being less valuable. T / F
- Employers and business leaders agreed with the survey's findings. T / F
- A business leader said maternity leave is better than ever before. T / F
- A lawyer isn't surprised women do not speak out about discrimination. T / F
- The lawyer said employers bury their heads in the sand. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. conducted | a. acknowledge |
| 2. suspected | b. opinions |
| 3. grievances | c. differ from |
| 4. points of view | d. carried out |
| 5. colleagues | e. all over |
| 6. contrast | f. thought |
| 7. recognise | g. dodging |
| 8. committed | h. complaints |
| 9. throughout | i. coworkers |
| 10. avoiding | j. dedicated |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think about working mothers being discriminated against?
- Should women complain more to bosses about discrimination?
- Why are working mothers discriminated against?
- Why would complaining be bad for a working mother's career?
- Should employers do more for working mothers?
- What do you think of people who say mothers should stay at home?
- Why would people devalue the opinions of a female colleague with a baby?
- Should childless colleagues stand up more for working mothers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. More than one in | a. their career prospects |
| 2. women had never filed | b. considered less worthy |
| 3. more detrimental to | c. to the shop floor |
| 4. progressing faster | d. any kind of complaint |
| 5. their points of view being | e. managing maternity leave |
| 6. businesses are better than ever at | f. four British mothers |
| 7. make the best use | g. few women speak out |
| 8. from boardroom | h. in the sand |
| 9. It is shocking that so | i. of women's talents |
| 10. burying their heads | j. up the career ladder |

Discussion – Student B

- What do working mothers need?
- Why do employers not agree with the survey?
- What is the worst kind of discrimination?
- What is maternity (and paternity) leave like in your country?
- How long should maternity leave be?
- Have you ever been discriminated against?
- Why do managers bury their heads in the sand? Do you ever do this?
- What questions would you like to ask the director of Britain's CBI?

Spelling

- coadnrcig to a survey
- tdlieaertmn to their career prospects
- vcearsegni aired in the survey
- being overlooked for irooopnmt
- being considered less hryotw
- geoescllau without children
- don't csgeireno (UK) / egcrznioe (USA) the picture
- metianyr leave
- naietgrteignr mothers on their return
- omictmdte to making sure...
- accused employers of givoaidn the issues
- ynibgru their heads in the sand

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. f	3. h	4. b	5. i
6. c	7. a	8. j	9. e	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Longer maternity leave

You think longer maternity leave is most important for new working mothers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): better creche facilities, working from home or financial support for baby.

Role B – Better creche facilities

You think better creche facilities is new working mothers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): longer maternity leave, working from home or financial support for baby.

Role C – Working from home

You think working from home is new working mothers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): better creche facilities, longer maternity leave or financial support for baby.

Role D – Financial support for baby

You think financial support for baby is new working mothers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): better creche facilities, working from home or longer maternity leave.

Speaking

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the ones women do better at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- manage companies
- drive
- cook
- give good advice
- be creative
- debate
- give advice
- be fair

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.